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U.S. HOSTAGE EXECUTED SAYS BEIRUT PAPER

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BEIRUT — The Islamic Jihad terror group claimed last night that it has executed kidnaped U.S. diplomat William Buckley to avenge Israel's air raid on the PLO headquarters in Tunisia.

The Beirut newspaper An Nahar said Islamic Jihad, or Islamic Holy War, made the claim.

It could not be independently confirmed, the newspaper said.

An Nahar is one of the most authoritative publications in the Arab world.

Buckley, 59-year-old bachelor and political officer with the U.S. Embassy, was abducted by unidentified gunmen



WILLIAM BUCKLEY

March 18, 1984, while driving his car.

A native of Medford, Mass., Buckley has been held the longest of six American hostages still in Lebanon.

If his death is confirmed, Buckley would become the first of the kidnaped Americans to be killed by his captors.

"We declare a revenge for the blood of the martyrs by announcing the execution," said an Islamic Jihad statement published in the Beirut newspaper.

It called Buckley a CIA spy and said he was head of the CIA's Lebanon station.

The statement was typewritten in Arabic and delivered by hand to An Nahar's office in west Beirut.

It was accompanied by a Polaroid photograph of the U.S. diplomat that the shadowy group said was taken

shortly before his death.

It was the first statement about the U.S. hostages from the Islamic group since Sept. 29.

At that time, a man claiming to represent Jihad said a deadline had been set for meeting the group's demands and announced the captives would hold a news conference.

Buckley last was reported alive in January, 1985 when he appeared on a videotape in which he called on the U.S. to "take action for our release quickly."

Islamic Jihad is believed to be a radical Shiite Moslem group linked to Iran.

It recently warned it would execute the U.S. hostages unless the Reagan administration forces Kuwait to release 17 Shiite Moslems imprisoned for bombing U.S., French and Kuwaiti targets in Kuwait in December 1983.